

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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R 041514Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3830
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 2804

EXDIS

MILITARY TREAT AS SPECAT

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ET, US, MASS
SUBJ: REFLECTIONS ON CLOSING AMERICAN INSTALLATIONS

1. LOOKING BACK OVER WRECKAGE OF PAST TEN DAYS, IT MAY BE USEFUL TO EXPLORE QUESTION OF WHAT IT WAS THAT LED TO PMAC'S APPARENTLY SUDDENT DECISION TO CLOSE FIVE U.S. INSTALLATIONS IN ETHIOPIA THEREBY REDUCING AMERICAN PRESENCE IN TERMS OF NUMBERS BY OVER 50 PERCENT AND INSTALLATIONS TO ONE, THE EMBASSY ITSELF, INCLUDING USAID, AS WELL AS TO NOTE MAJOR PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED.

2. UNDERLYING FACTOR WAS VERY PROBABLY SOVIET AGREEMENT IN DECEMBER TO FURNISH SUBSTANTIAL ARMS ASSISTANCE (UNDER BETTER TERMS AND FAR MORE QUICKLY THAN WE COULD). SOVIET ACQUIESCENCE ENABLED PMAC SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER DIVESTING
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ITSELF OF RELIANCE ON AMERICAN SECURITY ASSISTANCE WHICH MORE AND MORE WAS BECOMING AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THEM IN THEIR HEADLONG RUSH TO THE LEFT, PARTICULARLY TO POLIT-BURO IDEOLOGUES SOME OF WHOM HAVE BEEN ARGUING FOR A MARRIAGE AT OUR EXPENSE BETWEEN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SUBSTANTIAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR A RELATIVELY LONG TIME. SOVIET AGREEMENT ALSO OPENED WAY FOR ETHIOPIANS

TO BELIEVE THAT SOVIETS MIGHT RESTRAIN SOMALIS FROM ANY ADVENTURES IN OGADEN A/O DJIBOUTI, A ROLE THAT U.S. COULD NOT PLAY. FINAL DECISION TO DISPENSE WITH MAAG, HOWEVER, HAD TO AWAIT SOVIET PERFORMANCE WHICH UNTIL RECENT WEEKS WAS STILL ONLY marginally IN EVIDENCE. WITH ARRIVAL OF SUBSTANTIAL EQUIPMENT, DIE WAS PROBABLY CAST AND THERE REMAINED ONLY TIMING.

3. MEANWHILE, EVENTS OF FEB 3 ELIMINATED MENGISTU'S AND POLITBURO'S OPPOSITION IN PMAC. AMONG THOSE KILLED WERE MEN WHO, THOUGH NO LESS LEFTIST IN OUTLOOK THAN THE SURVIVORS, WERE PROBABLY AS A GROUP MORE PRAGMATIC THAN HARDLINER MENGISTU. INDEED, IT IS CONCEIVABLE (THOUGH WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE), THAT THEY EXERCISED A DEGREE OF CAUTION WITHIN THE PMAC RE WISDOM OF CUTTING THE LONG-STANDING MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH US TOO QUICKLY (ENCOURAGED BY ARMY AND MINISTRY OF DEFENSE). SOVIET BLOC'S HASTY EMBRACE OF MENGISTU AND VICE VERSA PLUS MENGISTU'S OWN EMERGENCE AS STRONGMAN IMMEDIATELY AFTER EVENTS OF FEB 3 PROBABLY SIGNALLED END TO ANY REAL RESTRAINT WITHIN PMAC.

4. AT ABOUT SAME TIME, WE FURNISHED EXCUSE THEY WERE NO DOUBT LOOKING FOR BY INFORMING THEM OF OUR DECISION TO REDUCE MAP. WE BELIEVE PMAC FULLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL NEXT FISCAL YEAR, BUT SUSPECT BASIC DECISION TO ELIMINATE MAAG HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN, ABETTED BY A CONVICTION BASED UPON OUR LONG DELAY IN ACTING ON THEIR MAJOR AMMO REQUEST THAT MAP REDUCTION WAS INDICATED.

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TIVE OF WANING U.S. INTEREST IN SUPPORT OF REVOLUTION AND THEREFORE ONLY A PRELUDE TO ADDITIONAL AMERICAN MOVES IN SECURITY ASSISTANCE FIELD ADVERSE TO THEIR INTERESTS. NEGATIVE IMPACT OF MAP DECISION WAS VERY LIKELY COMPOUNDED BY PERCEPTION THAT BY LINKING DECISION TO HUMAN RIGHTS, WE REALLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT REVOLUTION WAS ALL ABOUT. LONG-HELD SUSPICIONS THAT WE IN FACT DID NOT SUPPORT REVOLUTION WAS THEREFORE TRUE. IN ADDITION, BY THEN WAR IN ERITREA HAD HOTTED UP, PROBLEMS WITH EDU IN NORTH-WEST HAD GROWN SERIOUS, RELATIONS WITH SUDAN HAD SOURED, U.S. HAD CLEARLY MOVED CLOSER TO SUDAN AND IN ANY CASE HAD GOOD RELATIONS WITH OTHER ARAB "ENEMIES," ACTIVITY IN OGADEN HAD STEPPED UP, AND DJIBOUTI WAS STILL WAITING IN WINGS. PMAC COULD NOT WAIT FOR US TO MAKE UP OUR MINDS. FINALLY, CUBANS CAME ALONG APPARENTLY OFFERING ALMOST IMMEDIATE HELP. ONCE DECISION WAS TAKEN TO ACCEPT SOVIET AND CUBAN ADVISERS, MAAG'S DAYS WERE NO DOUBT NUMBERED. THERE WAS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT EPMG COULD TOLERATE HAVING ADVISERS FROM ALL THREE IN-COUNTRY

AT SAME TIME.

5. THERE ARE ALSO NUMEROUS INDICATIONS THAT SOVIET UNION MAY HAVE INFLUENCED ETHIOPIANS TO MOVE AS FAST AND AS DRASTICALLY AS THEY DID AGAINST US. KNOWING THAT U.S. MILITARY HAD TO GO IF HE HAD ANY REALISTIC HOPES OF PERSUADING SOVIETS TO BECOME MORE THAN LIMITED SUPPLIER OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE, MENGISTU MAY HAVE DECIDED TO THROW IN USIS AND NAMRU AS FURTHER SWEETENER. TIMING OF EXPULSION, COMING AS IT DID JUST PRIOR TO MENGISTU'S DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW ON WHAT IS PROBABLY MOST IMPORTANT DIPLOMATIC MISSION HE HAS EVER UNDERTAKEN, WAS CLEARLY DICTATED BY DESIRE TO PROVE HIS SOCIALIST CREDENTIALS AND TO PLACE HIMSELF IN MOST FAVORABLE NEGOTIATING POSITION POSSIBLE.

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EXDIS

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6. WHETHER OUR NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO CUT MAAG AND CLOSE KAGNEW ACTUALLY TRIGGERED FINAL ACTION IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW AS YET. BOTH ACTIONS MAY HAVE SIMPLY BEEN COINCIDENTAL. NEITHER HAS BEEN MENTIONED IN ANY OF THEIR STATEMENTS, EITHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, AND SUSPICION HERE THEREFORE IS THAT IF THEY HAD ANY REAL RELEVANCE TO THE UNFOLDING SCENARIO THEY WERE SMPLY

CATALYSTS ENABLING EPMG TO TAKE ACTIONS ALREADY DECIDED UPON, ALTHOUGH THEY MAY WELL HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN SETTING THE SHORT TIME LIMIT AS RESULT OF EPMG ANNOYANCE AT HAVING BEATEN THEM TO THE PUNCH.

7. CLOSURE OF NAMRU WAS PROBABLY LAST-MINUTE DECISION BASED SIMPLY ON FACT THEY WERE MILITARY. EVEN EPMG'S OWN PROPAGANDA WAS UNABLE TO COME UP WITH ANY REASON AT ALL FOR ASKING THEM TO LEAVE. REASONS FOR CLOSING USIS
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WERE NO DOUBT BASED UPON AN IDEOLOGY THAT COULD NO LONGER TOLERATE DISSEMINATION OF ANYTHING BUT THEIR OWN PROPAGANDA SINCE USIS HAD SCRUPOUSLY REFRAINED FROM GIVING THEM OVERT CAUSE FOR ACTION. REASONING, HOWEVER, MAY BE MORE COMPLEX THAN THAT, SINCE OTHER WESTERN CULTURAL CENTERS, NOTABLY BRITISH, WEST GERMAN AND FRENCH ARE STILL OPERATING.

8. KAGNEW, OF COURSE, HAD BECOME AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE DIRG BOTH IN NON-ALIGNED TERMS AND IN TERMS OF THEIR NEW-FOUND EMBRACE OF SOVIETS. IMMEDIATE REASON FOR CLOSURE, HOWEVER, WAS PROBABLY LINKED TO DECISION TO CLOSE CONSULATES IN ASMARA, A DECISION STIMULATED BY EPMG'S CERTAIN PERCEPTION THAT THEY NO LONGER WANTED OFFICIAL OBSERVERS IN ASMARA. REASONS, HOWEVER, ARE MORE OBSCURE. PERHAPS THEY DECIDED BAD PUBLICITY THEY HAVE RECEIVED CONSISTENTLY OVER ERITREA WAS IN PART TRACEABLE TO FOREIGN MISSIONS. THEY MAY ALSO HAVE PERCEIVED POSSIBILITY OF COMING TROUBLE IN ASMARA AND WANTED TO AVOID HAVING TO COPE WITH SECURITY PROBLEMS INVOLVING OFFICIAL PERSONNEL OF OTHER NATIONS, OR THEY MAY HAVE PLANS FOR ASMARA REGION IN THEIR CURRENT PARTIAL MOBILIZATION EFFORTS THAT THEY SIMPLY DID NOT WANT FOREIGNERS ON SPOT TO KNOW ABOUT. WHATEVER, THEY STILL HAVE KING-SIZE PROBLEM IN CONTINUED PRESENCE OF SOME THOUSAND ITALIANS AND SMATTERING OF OTHER NATIONALITIES WHOSE SAFETY THEY NOW HAVE ASSUMED PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

9. WITHDRAWAL ITSELF, ONCE ETHIOPIANS GOT THEMSELVES ORGANIZED AND WERE PREPARED TO MAKE DECISIONS ON IMMEDIATE AND PRESSING PROBLEMS, WENT SMOOTHLY ENOUGH ALTHOUGH SUCH WOULD OBVIOUSLY NOT HAVE BEEN THE CASE IF WE HAD NOT BEEN WILLING TO PROVIDE WHATEVER ASSETS WERE NEEDED TO GET JOB DONE OR EMBASSY OR CONGEN ELEMENTS AFFECTED HAD DRAGGED THEIR FEET IN RISING TO CHALLENGE. ETHIOPIANS
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IN BEGINNING TOLD US THEY WANTED MAKE WITHDRAWAL AS SMOOTH AS POSSIBLE AND, IN THEIR OWN WAY, THEY EVENTUALLY CAME REASONABLY CLOSE TO MAKING THEIR PROMISE COME TRUE.

10. PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS ON ETHIOPIAN SIDE APART FROM CREATING BODY WITH AUTHORITY TO MAKE DECISIONS WERE OBVIOUS EARLY CONCEPTION ON PART OF SOME OF THEM (PRINCIPALLY SECURITY FORCES) THAT EPMG ACTIONS WERE A FORM OF NATIONALIZATION WHEREBY WE WERE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM OUR OWN PREMISES, AND COMMUNICATIONS DIFFICULTIES WITHIN EPMG. (AT ONE STAGE, IT TOOK HOURS FOR AN EPMG DECISION TO ALLOW ENTRY AT NAMRU TO FILTER DOWN TO GUARDS ON SPOT. WHEN THEY DID LEARN OF IT, THEY WENT OFF DUTY, AND WE HAD TO START ALL OVER AGAIN WITH RELIEF CREW.) OTHER PROBLEM WAS LATENESS OF TIME EXTENSION. EMBASSY AND CONGEN HAD TO WORK FOR THREE DAYS ON ASSUMPTION THAT FOUR DAYS WERE ALL WE HAD, DESPITE ASSURANCES THAT TIME WAS NO PROBLEM. RESULT IN ADDIS WAS THAT ALL PERSONNEL HAD PACKED THEIR PERSONAL EFFECTS IN CONEXT CONTAINERS AND COULD HAVE LEFT IN ALLOTTED TIME. EXTENSION BASICALLY PERMITTED EVACUATION OF ALL EFFECTS AND SOME EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES BY AIR, AND PARTIAL CLEARANCE OF PROPERTY FROM INSTALLATIONS BY REAR GUARD. EXTENSION IN ASMARA WAS MORE IMMEDIATELY USEFUL IN THAT IT PERMITTED REENTRY TO KAGNEW AND EVACUATION OF ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE WITHIN FOUR-DAY LIMIT.

11. PROBLEMS, OF COURSE, ARE FAR FROM OVER. EMBASSY COMPOUND IS BULGING AND LOOKS LIKE USED CAR LOT. INSTALLATIONS IN ADDIS ARE LARGELY CLEARED BUT SOME 60 RESIDENCES REMAIN TO BE CLEARED OUT AND TURNED BACK TO EPMG. WHAT IS NEEDED NOW ARE PROMPT AND CLEAR INSTRUCTION SFROM PARENT AGENCIES CONCERNING EXCESS PROPERTY. WHAT WE DO NOT NEED ARE PIECEMEAL INSTRUCTIONS TELLING US TO SHIP "X" WIDGET HERE AND "Y" WIDGET THERE EXCEPT FOR PERSONAL EFFECTS.

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